



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
November 30, 2006
Borderland State Park, Easton, MA

Meeting Minutes

Stewardship Councilors in Attendance: Chairman Dick Cross, Councilors Julian Agyeman, Christina Crowley, Michael Dutton, Whitney Hatch, Laura Johnson, John Natoli, Henry Lee, and Dan Wolf.

Public Attendees: Michele Biscoe, Somerville Dog Owners Group; Neil Noveletsky, Borderland Advisory Council; Dick Miller, Lake Cochituate Advisory Council; Carole Berkowitz, Protect Our Water Resources; Mike Ryan, Friends of the Fells; Renata von Tscharnier, Charles River Conservancy; Sonya Desoi, Charles River Conservancy; Katherine Joy, Office of Senator Creedon; Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon; Judy Lehrer Jacobs, Friends of Blue Hills; John Ventresco, Borderland Advisory Council & Friends of Borderland; Jay McCaffrey, Sierra Club; and Eva Webster, Chestnut Hill Reservoir Coalition.

DCR Staff in Attendance: Commissioner Stephen Burrington, Tricia Singer, Karst Hoozeboom, Tom LaRosa, Margie Lynch, Leslie Luchonok, Patrice Kish, Wendy Pearl, Kevin Hollenbeck, Renee Tavares, Brian Shanahan, Ellenor Yahrmarkt, Bob O'Connor (EOEA), Nikki Belmonte, Joe Rotondo and Jack Donahue.

I. Call To Order (1:05 p.m.), Chairman Cross

- a. Chairman Cross reconfirmed three *Strategic Goals* which are: to have an agency capable of delivering world class conservation and recreation services; to demonstrate progress towards world class parks; and to generate public appreciation and support for the resources we manage.

II. Commissioner's Report, Commissioner Stephen Burrington

- a. **Visible progress, building a great agency, and building public confidence & support**
 - i. DCR is answering the need for more effective communication with the public through a major initiative to mainstream the public involvement process. Current examples include the Historic Parkway Treatment Guidelines and accompanying policy, and the Public Outreach and Consultation for Forest Cutting Plans policy.
 - ii. There are five situations on the parkways where there is an opportunity to implement the Historic Parkway Treatment Guidelines. Over the next year these projects will be planned using these guidelines, focusing on people first then traffic.

III. Committee Updates and Meeting Schedules

a. Finance Committee, Whitney Hatch

- i. The Finance Committee received an update on key hires including the new CIO and Trust officer positions. Budget and accounting directors will shortly follow.
- ii. Progress has been made on financial reporting but payroll still is not able to be put into park "buckets." Reporting will help with gap analysis of park operations that the Committee has asked to be completed on one or two of the properties.
- iii. DCR saw \$6.7M in the Governor's 9c cuts. Agencies had to take a 1% cut on admin/payroll accounts except for previously vetoed items. Due to the extensive earmarks in the DCR budget and previously submitted veto items, only \$700K of the operating budget was affected.
- iv. Councilor Hatch drafted a letter to Governor-Elect Patrick for the Council's consideration that introduces the Council and highlights their priorities. Important themes discussed in the draft letter include staffing and reorganization priorities, expedition of the hiring process, putting systems in place for performance and accountability, investment in

Resource Management Planning, funding for basic measurement capabilities and moving forward with the agreement with MassHighway on bridge reconstruction. The draft letter also examines funding sufficiency over 20-years. Whitney would like input and to send it to Patrick, Murray and cc: energy and environment transition team. Councilor Lee questioned the purpose of the letter and suggested a 48-hr comment period (12/5 deadline).

v. John Natoli will join the Finance Committee.

b. Policy Committee, *Julian Agyeman*

- i. The group still struggles with a world-class parks vision versus budget realities.
- ii. The Committee currently has two policies under consideration – see sections III and IV.

c. Resource Management Plan Committee, *Henry Lee*

- i. Please see sections V and VI.

III. Adoption of Historic Parkways Treatment Guidelines and Policy, *Patrice Kish*

- a. Ms. Kish gave a presentation on the history, application and implementation strategy.
- b. In response to public concern, EOEA launched an interagency effort to look at parkway conditions in 2001. An inventory of 42 parkways on DCR property was completed. Two demonstration projects have emerged since (Memorial Drive Phase I in 2003-04 and Mt. Greylock Parkway Rehabilitation which is currently out for bid).
- c. Guiding principles included the concept that a parkway isn't a road, but rather a park with a road in it and is therefore protected by Article 97, a parkway is a historic resource and requires a multidisciplinary approach to management and a parkway is the original multi-modal facility.
- d. The Guidelines are applied when one or more thresholds are breached: (1) there are alterations to current function; (2) new elements are introduced; (3) there is a change in the balance of users; and/or (4) the removal, rehabilitation or reconstruction of a significant historic feature.
- e. The policy directs DCR to apply the guidelines to all projects regardless of funding or management issues and is a new piece to the Guidelines.
- f. Councilor Agyeman, on behalf of the Policy Committee, recommended conditional approval of the Guidelines and Policy with the caveat that a month-long public comment period is established on the DCR web site. In particular he is seeking input on the wording of section 3 of the policy. *All in favor*

Councilor Natoli asked for an example of reconstructing historic features. Ms. Kish cited the restoration of the historic landscape of Memorial Drive.

Mike Ryan of the Friends of the Fells commended DCR and suggested developing a public education strategy so that the legislature will be encouraged to find funding. He also inquired as to how the guidelines will be made available. Ms. Kish stated that the Guidelines will be available on the DCR web site.

Dick Miller of the Lake Cochituate Advisory Council noted that the MA Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board and MassBike will be submitting their input.

IV. Adoption of Public Outreach and Consultation for Forest Cutting Plans Policy, *Bob O'Connor*

- a. Mr. O'Connor gave a presentation with handouts of some documents included in the policy and a hierarchy of planning.
- b. The policy provides a way for the public to look ahead at DCR's plans and offer comments. Timber Sales summary and maps would be developed by a management forester and would be posted a year ahead of time. Notification will occur twice per year (June 30 and Dec 31 for 45

- days comment periods) as postings on the DCR web site and the Environmental Monitor. A mailing list will be created to notify constituents of upcoming postings.
- c. After the public comment period, a timber sale of high environmental sensitivity would follow a six-step process of intensive review. For other timber sales, a silvicultural prescription would be drawn up immediately after the comment period and forest cutting plan would be developed. All cutting plans must be filed under Ch. 132 and reviewed by DCR's service forestry group and Natural Heritage before proceeding with the cutting.
 - d. "Why we Cut Trees in CT" was used as a model education piece.
 - e. Councilor Agyeman, on behalf of the Policy Committee, recommended conditional support for and implementation of the Public Outreach and Consultation of Forest Cutting Policy with three caveats: (1) joint meetings should take place between the RMP and Policy committees to look at better inter-bureau cooperation; (2) clarification of issues relating to timber cutting and the RMP process; and (3) establishment of a three-month public comment period.

Heidi Ricci of Mass Audubon commented that this is a major step in the right direction, but questioned how this policy fits into overall management planning. Ms. Ricci also submitted comments on behalf of Alexander Dawson and Susan Benoit, specifically inquiring about the distinction between permitted cutting activities in State Forests and State Parks. Commissioner Burrington pointed out that the labels of "Forest" versus "Park" may conflict with reality and would examine on a case by case basis.

V. Adoption of Chestnut Hill Resource Management Plan, Leslie Luchonok and Wendy Pearl

- a. Mr. Luchonok outlined the extensive public participation (outlined in Appendix B of the RMP).
- b. Ms. Pearl gave a presentation on the RMP, outlining the DCR and MWRA management responsibilities. RMP planning began in January 2005 with a working group of 30+ representatives from neighborhood groups.
- c. The priority findings included issues with access and parking, inconsistent levels of management, deteriorating circulation systems, loss of historic landscape character, and natural resources. It was recommended that the property should be treated as a historic landscape.
- d. Written comments focused mainly on the possible loss of parking and community gardens.
- e. Response to findings include developing a vegetation management plan, recapturing the character of Chestnut Hill Driveway, formalizing community partnerships and outlining treatment guidelines for parking area, conducting partial rehabilitation of the 1928-29 fence on Beacon Street, restore the elevated area along the dam as an outdoor 1901 exhibit which would require the removal of the fence and remove playground remnants due to unsafe conditions and develop safe playground features.
- f. Phase I projects will include path restoration, vegetation management plan, hazard tree management and a public participation plan developed by DCR's External Affairs division. Commissioner Burrington stated that there is a firm commitment in the DCR Capital plan.

Councilor Johnson stated that public use may be restrained due to small amount of available parking (13 spaces for 3 hour time limit).

On behalf of the RMP Committee, Councilor Lee recommended to approve this plan with the following language: "The Stewardship Council approves the Chestnut Hill Resource Management Plan. However, it does so with a deep concern that over the last thirty years, the Commonwealth has allowed this unique property to fall into disrepair. There has been an absence of leadership, vision and management and unless this is rectified, investments in capital improvements will not significantly improve the quality of the visitor experience. We call upon the department to address the factors that have caused this cycle of disrepair, to

develop a vision for the future uses of this property in a context that includes other state and local properties in the Boston-Brookline-Newton area and to create a plan to market this vision to existing and prospective users. The Council requests an update from DCR by December 2007 on its progress to meet these concerns."

Councilor Wolf suggested the Council visit DCR areas that need repair and cause concern with the public.

Chairman Cross moved to approve the RMP with Councilor Lee's commentary. *All in favor*

VI. Adoption of Central Berkshire District Forest Management Resource Plan, Jim DiMaio

- a. Councilor Agyeman's comments on global warming were incorporated, but approval was tabled due to confusion on whether the correct document was circulated prior to the meeting.

VII. Oversight Strategy Review/Approval for Public Comment Period

- a. Draft text for the Oversight Strategy is ready for 30-day public comment period. The document will be posted on the DCR Stewardship Council web page beginning Dec. 1. *All in favor*

VIII. Annual Report Review and Letter

- a. The current Oversight Strategy directs the Council to approve the Annual Report, but instead a subset of the Council who reviewed the Report decided to draft a letter to accompany the DCR mailing. Chairman Cross moved to approve the letter as addressed to "DCR constituents." *All in favor*

IX. Approval of Minutes from 9/29/06 and 10/27/06 Meetings – *All in favor*

It was noted to replace Henry Lee's name under RMP Committee update in the 10/27/06 minutes.

X. 2007 Meeting Schedule

- a. It was proposed to hold Council meetings at the beginning of a calendar month to better serve holiday schedules and other deadlines. Specific dates are Friday, January 5, Friday, February 2, Friday, March 2, Friday, April 6, Friday, May 4, Thursday, June 7, Thursday, July 12, Thursday, August 2, Friday, September 7, Friday, October 4, Friday, November 2, and Friday, December 7. *All in favor*

XI. Public Comment

- a. Michelle Biscoe of the Somerville Dog Owners Group submitted a written statement to the Council urging DCR to maintain on-leash and off-leash regulations and to take the appropriate safety measures. She stated that excluding dogs from parks excludes people.
- b. Judy Lehrer Jacobs of the Friends of Blue Hills suggested that the Council should be proactive towards the possible change in Commissioner in 2007 by creating a job description.
- c. Eva Webster of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir Coalition stated her concern for the removal of the playground structures. She urged DCR not to base their course of action on current maintenance budget and to consider the effects on the majority park users.
- d. Mike Ryan of the Friends of the Fells submitted a list of concerns revolving around DCR's transparency with Fells area parkway planning and the Langwood Commons project. He noted that a letter of concern was mailed to the Commissioner. Commissioner Burrington noted that the response letter was included in the Council's packets.
- e. James McCaffrey of the Sierra Club elaborated on Mr. Ryan's comments stating that letter sent to Commissioner Burrington was signed by 20 concerned organizations. Mr. McCaffrey feels that the DCR was premature in starting discussions with the Langwood Commons developer. He

also stated that the Langwood Commons developer is not in compliance because the appropriate documentation has not been submitted. Commissioner Burrington emphasized that plans for the parkways will continue separate of the Langwood Commons project and the appropriate level of development will be determined based upon the parkway vision.

- f. Heidi Ricci of Mass Audubon stated her concern for the Langwood Commons developer paying for the consultant and that the process should be controlled by DCR. Commissioner Burrington stated that DCR will direct consultant and that the developer does not oversee consultant's work.
- g. Neil Noveletsky of the Friends of Borderland stated his concern for park user safety at Borderland State Park's due to the loss of staff. Specifically he cited that 300-400 visit the park per weekend and only one staff person is on duty. He is also concerned that recommendations to building improvements and some trail work have been put off.
- h. Renata von Tscharner of the Charles River Conservancy recommended that the Commonwealth be at the table during Harvard University development in order to reap similar benefits that the cities involved will receive.

Meeting adjourned 3:35 pm